

**A MONTHLY OF DRAVIDIAN LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA**

**r->t IN LATIN AND MALAYALAM:  
Implications for Historical Linguistics \***

**Introduction**

Context dependent inflection of verbs is an almost universal grammatical characteristic in ancient and modern languages. Verbs are modified to derive words of other lexical categories like noun, adverb, adjective etc. In view of the extensive role played by verbs, it will not be surprising to find comparable alterations in verb forms of languages that have been juxtaposed for long; or to put it in another way, presence of similar modifications in verbs of two languages could very well be an evidence of their long-term association.

Malayalam is a classical language of the Indian subcontinent spoken by the people of the state of Kerala lying in

the most southwestern part of India. Kerala is bound on the west by the Arabian Sea giving it a coastal line of about 800 km. dotted by numerous ports and on the east by a mountain range of almost equal length; the land in between is crossed by more than forty rivers. The state, noted for its variety of spices, has had intense spice trade which goes back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. (Sreedhara Menon, A. 2008). The word *dravid*, from which Dravidian arises, also means cardamom (*Elam*), one of the important spices that prompted trade association between Kerala and Europe. The earliest Dravidian word in Greek is *quinnamon*, Ctesia's name for cinnamon (a spice), derived from *karuva*, a Malayalam word (Caldwell, R. 1853). Incidentally, *Elam* could be related to Elamite which has close association with Dravidian languages (McAlpin, D.W. 1981). Roman coins dating from 117 B.C. to A.D. 123 have been unearthed in Kerala, emphasizing its early relationships with the west (Sreedhara Menon, A. 2007). Kerala has been found mentioned in the Bible and St. Thomas, the Apostle, had reached Kerala in A.D. 52 and established seven churches (Cherian, C.V. 1973). Christians constitute about 20% of the population of Kerala. The land had been referred to or visited by Pliny the Elder, according to whom Muziris (now Crangannore) is the nearest port in India (Pliny's *Natural History*, Book 6, Canto 26).

Malayalam, a language belonging to the Dravidian family. is very much influenced by Sanskrit which belongs to the Indo-European family. The Aryans supposedly migrated to Kerala from North India around A.D. 600, hence the Sanskrit influence on Malayalam might have started at least from that period. Malayalam is also influenced by English, a Germanic branch of Indo-European language, which itself has borrowed extensively from Latin. Malayalam has been affected by English grammatically (Girish, P.M. 2005). A notable feature, the usage of English words with addition of Malayalam suffixes, is peculiar to Keralites; e.g. ബോറൻ (*bōRan* for boring person), ബോറടിക്കുക (*bōRaTikkuka* for getting bored), ബോറടിച്ചിരിക്കുക (*bōRaTippikkuka* for

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\*The author is not a linguist. Hence, this article need not be viewed only from a linguist's angle.

making bored) etc. This suggests that Malayalam, an agglutinative language, is also highly flexible and amenable to be influenced even by the European languages.

Malayalam is unique in certain features. One is the presence of the letter “oo”, sometimes written as *ḡ*, an alveolar voiceless stop. In the intervocalic position, this alveolar voiceless stop has duration similar to other geminated stops. When it occurs after a nasal, it is represented orthographically by [o]. Phonetically it represents an alveolar voiced stop. Word initially in loan words [oo] represents non-geminate voiceless stop. Tamil, another Dravidian language, also has a letter similar to “oo”. However, as Caldwell had emphatically noted, it is always pronounced as ttR in Tamil where it is not phonetically equivalent to alveolar [tt].

This phoneme is found in a few South Dravidian languages like Irula, Kota and Toda. These languages are closely related to Malayalam. All other Indian languages lack this phoneme, making Malayalam the only language with six orthographically representable voiceless unaspirated stops which are pronounced in spoken language also. This phoneme is used to represent *t* and *tt* in transliteration of European languages; Father Clementi, in 1772, was possibly the first to use *tt* to represent this letter. Orthographically it looks like a doubling of the letter *o*, the voiced post alveolar trill [R]. Because of this orthographic doubling, despite there being no phonetic similarity between the two, *oo* has been since long considered as a geminate of *t*.

Following the convention applicable to all geminates, *oo* is never used word initially despite a frequency of usage of 0.34% (Prema & Joseph). Of the early grammarians, Dr. Gundert considered *oo* as an orthographical geminate but not a phonetic one (Gundert 1872). To Rev. Mathan (1863), it is an independent letter, an alveolar stop, and Lepsius included it as a sixth *varga* (class) in addition to the five seen in Sanskrit languages (Lepsius 1863). Recently it is extensively being used word initially to transliterate European words starting with *t*, such as time, telephone etc., showing that there is no phonetic contra indication for such use. One problem

with *oo* is that it can be mistaken for two adjacent *o*-s that can occur in a word. Writing *oo* as *ḡ* precludes this confusion. It may be noted that such a practice is not found in Tamil. Malayalam also has the letter *ṇo* (*nta*), a conjunct of alveolar [n] and alveolar *t*. In the past, it was written as *oṇo*, with the *n* inserted in the middle of *oo* (Drummond 1799) or as *ṇoo* with the full *oo* to one side, clearly showing that it is a conjunct of the two letters (Clementi). The *ṇ* denoted here belongs to a group of orthographically representable consonants called *cillu* which is also unique to Malayalam. Tamil lacks conjunct letters. It is emphasized that Malayalam is the only Indian language in which words such as ‘tint’, ‘tent’, ‘truant’ etc., can be transliterated without any phonological alteration. Overall, from the emergence of *t*, it can be surmised that Malayalam had come into significant contact with Indo-European languages.

One reason, other than its orthographic appearance, that misled grammarians to the belief that *oo* is a geminate of *o* was the unique feature of Malayalam, possibly first noticed by Robert Drummond, who had written the first detailed Malayalam grammar book in English, in 1799. In the section on causal or effective verbs, he noted that: ‘What we (*the English*) express in two verbs, the Malabars (*an old name for Keralites*) do by a single word, which may be termed a causal or effective verb’. Thus, to make to come, to cause to do, to make to love, are, in Malabars, single expressions. However, as these are formed in various modes according to the form of the radical verb, the following rules are laid down for more readily distinguishing the primary verb. Verbs in *oṇṇu* (*Runnu*) double *oṇṇu* into *ooṇṇu* (*tunnu*). Here it is alveolar voiceless stop. Although phonemically geminate according to Malayalam pattern, its duration is almost similar to single consonant of Latin and other European languages. Hence *t* is not represented as geminate *ṇṇooṇṇu* (to become cool), *ṇṇooṇṇu* (*āttunnu*; to make cool); *ṇṇooṇṇu* (to ascend) *ṇṇooṇṇu* (*ēttunnu*; to make ascend); *ṇṇooṇṇu* (to be altered), *ṇṇooṇṇu* (*māttunnu*; to make altered). This is done in Tamil also, but, as mentioned earlier, pronunciation-wise,

it differs from t. This cannot be labelled as transitivisation (though Caldwell terms it so), since that can be done differently in Malayalam in the case of the same words. Adjectives are routinely formed from either the radical or the modified verb with the addition of the appropriate suffix which is the same for both forms; e.g. മാറിയ (māriya) meaning ‘that which altered’ from the verb മാറുക (māruka, alter), and മാറ്റിയ (māttiya) meaning ‘that which was altered’ from the verb മാറ്റുക (māttuka, to alter).

In view of the ancient association of Kerala with Europe, the presence of r->t alteration in verbs and the absence of orthographically representable and phonemically similar t in any other major Indian language, it is possible that it was borrowed from an ancient European language; and this language may have similar verb alterations and influenced Malayalam grammar too.

[To be continued]  
V.N. Bhattathiri

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**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON  
DRAVIDIAN TRIBAL LINGUISTICS:  
RETROSPECT AND PROSPECTS**

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The Department of Dravidian and Computational Linguistics, Dravidian University is organizing a two-day National Seminar on *Dravidian Tribal Linguistics: Retrospect and Prospects* on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Dravidian University, Kuppam. Those who are interested in participating and presenting papers may please contact the coordinator Prof. G. Balasubramonian (E-mail: [gbalu123@gmail.com](mailto:gbalu123@gmail.com)).

**Important Dates**

Abstract submission	6.3.2015
Acceptance of abstracts	10.3.2015
Submission of full paper	20.3.2015

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**“MANY RAMAYANAMS” – SAYS THUNCHAT  
SHRI RAMANUJAN EZHUTHACCHAN? –  
A RESPONSE**

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Prof. T. Madhava Menon wrote in the January 2015 issue of *DLA News*, asking for a clarification about the verse in the Ayodhya Kanda, wherein Sita

contends with Rama that “I have heard many Ramayana-s recounted by many gifted poets, but in none of them did rāghava (rāma) go to the forest leaving Sita behind.”. He quoted the relevant section from the *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa* of Ezhuttacchan and notes that a corresponding text is found in the *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇam Kīlīpāṭṭu* as well.

This episode is noted by A.K. Ramanujan in his essay *Three Hundred Ramayanas* (Dharwadker 1999, pp. 143) as well. He traces it to the Sanskrit *Adhyatma Ramayana*, but does not furnish an explanation. My current note is in response to the selfsame point. There are two distinct Sanskrit sources that record this peculiar statement and there is a satisfactory explanation provided within the mythopoetic universe of the *itihāsa-purāṇā-s*.

1. The *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* in Sanskrit – very popular in the North, particularly with the sect of Kabir and his guru Ramananda (who is sometimes said to be the author of the text). It can be assigned to 15-16<sup>th</sup> century, since the Marathi poet Eknath (died 1608) calls it a modern text (vide Bhandarkar Vaishnavism etc., pp. 48).

Here is the Sanskrit verse relevant to the discussion:

*rāmāyaṇāni bahuśaH śrutāni bahubhir dvijaiH |  
sītām vinā vanam rāmo gatah kim kutracid vada || 77 ||  
atastvayā gamiṣyāmi... etc.. || 78 ||*

*Ayodhya Kāṇḍa, Canto 3.77-78*

2. The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* (Sanskrit)

Popular tradition ascribes the text to Vālmiki but the internal evidence points otherwise. This text has elaborate descriptions of many *tirtha-s* and pilgrimage spots of South India, like Gokarna and Rāmeśwaram. While searching for a bride for Lava, even the Southern kingdoms of Kānci and Vijayanagara are visited. The language is rather modern and the title *Chatrapati* is used, as a consequence of which Prof. V. Raghavan assigns it to early 18<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting that it was produced in the Tanjore Maratha courtly milieu. This text is popular amongst the Tamils, since Mahākavi Subrahmanya Bharati has translated it into the Tamil language.

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Recent Publications: **Studies on Bangla and Dravidian**, Syamala Sasidharan, Sourav Chakraborty & G.K. Panikkar (Eds.), 2014, pp. 208, Rs. 220/- (US\$ 20/-). **Tulu: An Intensive Course**, M. Rama, 2013, pp. 12 + 132, Rs. 200/- (US\$ 20/-). **Bangla Basic Vocabulary**, Tapas Kayal & Dhruvajyoti Das, 2014, PB, Demy 1/8, Pp. xvi + 128, Rs. 150/- (US\$ 15/-).

*Ayodhya Kānda*, canto 6.11 of the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* has a verse with Sita insisting that she will accompany Rama to the forest, giving the same explanation as seen in the *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa* above.

### The Solution – Kalpabheda or Kalpāntara

In the circumstance of discussing the *Ahalyā śāpa* episode, Prof. V. Raghavan discusses the concept of *kalpa-bheda*, or *kalpāntara*, which is crucial for a coherent exegesis of *purāṇic* mythopoesis. It entails the use of the cyclic nature of the various temporal units in a nested loop to explain variants or repetitions of a certain adventure, act or curse in each age (*kalpa*).

Hence, there are countless *kalpa*-s, each with a quartette of *yuga*-s [*Kṛta*, *Treta*, *Dwāpara* and *Kali*], and each *kalpa* has a repetition of the events of the previous *yuga*, with minor or major variations. Every *kalpa* will have the lives of the same characters re-enacted, and the multiple variants on the themes of stories of well-known characters will be reconciled by saying that both versions of the tale occurred albeit in different *kalpa*-s.

### The Poet as a Narratologist

The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* has frequent, deliberate and self-conscious use of the device of *Kalpabheda* and seems to have been written with a view to document alternative accounts of many episodes in the Rāma story. Further, within the story, he uses a metadiscursive strategy to introduce *Kalpabheda*, wherein a character Viṣṇudāsa questions a certain Rāmadāsa about these deviations in the Rāma story, and the latter explains it using the trope of *Kalpabheda*; saying that while Rāma incarnated in each *kalpa*, he played his role differently, accounting for the multiple narratives, all of which are equally valid.

As evidenced by many variant episodes in the *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa*, and this oft-used device of *kalpabheda*, the poet establishes himself as a student of the Rāma tale and its variants. He is in this aspect, an intellectual predecessor of A.K. Ramanujan, in being a narratologist of the Rāma epos.

### References

Bhandarkar, R.G. 1965. *Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Major Religious Systems of India*, Varanasi. Pp. 48.

Ramanujan, A.K. 1999. “Three hundred Ramayanas: Five examples and three thoughts on translation” in Dharwadker, V. & Blackburn, S.H. (Eds.), *The Collected Essays of AK Ramanujan*. New Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 143.

Raghavan, V. 1998. *Sanskrit Ramayanas other than Valmiki’s. The Adbhuta, Adhyatama, and Ananda Ramayanas*. Chennai: The V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts.

Richman, P. (Ed.). 1992. *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Naresh Keerthi

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### NATIONAL SEMINAR ON MALAYALAM GRAMMATICAL STUDIES AND CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE

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The Department of Linguistics, Malayalam University is conducting a three-day National Seminar on *malayāḷa vyākaraṇa paṭhanaiṅṅaḷum samakālika bhāṣayum* from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> March at Akshara Campus, Tirur. Eminent linguists, grammarians and researchers will participate and present papers.

#### Important Dates:

Abstract submission	15.3.2015
Submission of full paper	20.3.2015

For more details, log on to [www.malayalamuniversity.edu.in](http://www.malayalamuniversity.edu.in).

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### SPECIAL LECTURE BY PROF. HANS HENRICH HOCK AT ISDL

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A special lecture was delivered on the *Development of Stop Consonants from Proto Dravidian* by Prof. Hans Henrich Hock, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics and Sanskrit, University of Illinois at the International School of Dravidian Linguistics on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The members of the Council of Direction, the research fellows of ISDL and the faculty members of the Departments of Linguistics and Tamil, University of Kerala attended the meeting. Prof. G.K. Panikkar, Hon. Director, ISDL chaired the session.

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Recent Publications: **The Morphosyntax of the Dravidian Languages**, P.S. Subrahmanyam, 2013, pp. xxx + 687, Rs. 1,000/- (US\$ 100/-). **A Survey of Smṛiti Literature**, N.P. Unni, 2013, pp. 8 + 164, Rs. 200/- (US\$ 20/-). **A Contrastive Study of Case in Bengali and Tamil**, Sourav Chakraborty, 2012, pp. 136, Rs. 120/- (US\$ 5/-).

**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON  
LANGUAGE DISORDERS AND THERAPEUTIC  
PROCEDURES OF  
DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN**

The International School of Dravidian Linguistics organized a national seminar on *Language Disorders and Therapeutic Procedures of Differently abled Children* on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015. Scholars from different universities and institutions participated, presented papers and actively took part in the deliberations.

**NEW ENROLMENT FOR LIFE-MEMBERSHIP  
(February 2015)**

**1. Mr. Sakthi Vel S.**

M.Phil. (Computational Linguistics)  
Department of Linguistics, University of Kerala  
Karyavattom Campus, Thiruvananthapuram – 695 581  
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**2. Ms. Neha Maurya**

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House No. S 15/52, Usarpurwa Bharlai, Shivpur  
Varanasi – 221 003, Uttar Pradesh

**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON  
AUTOMATIC LANGUAGE TRANSLATION –  
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

A national seminar on *Automatic Language Translation - Problems and Prospects* was conducted on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the International School of Dravidian Linguistics. Computer scientists, linguists and scholars from different universities and institutions attended the seminar and shared the knowledge.

**SOME HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ISSUES  
CONCERNING THE HISTORY AND  
PRE-HISTORY OF TAMIL NADU\***

The three issues discussed in this paper are given here one by one.

1. K.T. Ravi Varma's (1998) conclusive arguments for placing the origin and earliest locale of Chera kings in Tamil Nadu, Karur and its immediate west / north west.

\* Paper presented in the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Session of *Tamil Nadu History Congress 2014*.

2. There is the following schism in the views of eminent historians and scholars on the origin and earliest locale of the Chera kings mentioned in Tamil Sangam literature of circa 300 B.C. – A.D. 300:

A. The Cheras were originally ruling from Karur on Amaravathi river in present Tamil Nadu and only later founded a city with the same name on the West Coast.

B. Cheras were originally ruling from Vanchi [also called Karuvur] on (present) Kerala Coast, with Muciri as the port city (that capital was at the present site of Thiruvanjikalam near Cranganore). Only later, they conquered southern Kongu and founded a city with the name Karuvur (or Vanchi), which now exists as the capital of the present Karur district of Tamil Nadu (on the Amaravathi river). (The junior branch of the Cheras seems to have ruled at the latter place).

3. The issue has been re-examined with great acumen after intelligent appraisal of all the original sources including the crucial Sangam poems, by K.T. Ravi Varma (1998) in his insightful book *On the Original Home of Cheras and the Wandering Vanchi* (pp. 202), published by Reading Promotion Foundation of India, Kottayam. Ravi Varma's study has made stand A unassailable. His arguments expose the weakness of stand B (the dogma of the Cheras' western autochthony) and provide multidisciplinary support for stand A. He rests his stand on the following:

I (a) The military might of the Cheras as depicted in Sangam literature does not support stand B above. In fact, the Cheras are shown as such a mediocre power that it is difficult to believe that they could conquer and maintain extensive areas between the Palghat gap and Karur/Salem region, which is what they would have had to do, if they had started out from the West Coast. It is much easier to believe that they felt threatened in the east where they had initially set up their chiefdom and were forced to seek out safer pastures in the West Coast. Paranar's *Akananuru* (212) mentions a Chera king, Kuttuvan, who had no opposition on land but had to face sea battles with pirates purposely.

Recent Publications: **The Contribution of Melpüttur Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatiri to Sanskrit Literature with Special Reference to Vyākaraṇa**, P. Visalakshy, 2013, Crown ¼, pp. 428, Rs. 900/- (US\$ 81/-). **A Contrastive Analysis of the Phonological Systems of Bengali and Malayalam**, Dhruvajyoti Das, 2014, pp. xii + 140, Rs. 220/- (US\$ 20/-). **Veṭṭakka:ḍa Iruḷa Tuṇḍumallige - Ballads and Dictionary - Three Dialects**, R. Perialwar, 2014, pp. 8 + 112, Rs. 150/- (US\$ 15/-).

(b) All the places with which the Cheras were traditionally and sentimentally connected, such as Kolli hills (Salem District), Ayirai hill (Aivar Malai near Palani) and Pulinatu (near or around Karuvur) are in the east.

(c) Archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic and literary evidences indicate that Karuvur/Karur was the Sangam-age capital Vanci of the Cheras. No evidence of any kind is available to show that there was an earlier Chera capital on the West Coast.

II All the big battles fought by the early Chera kings were with the Cholas. This was before they conquered Konkunatu. Since the location of the Cholas as the eastern-most kingdom of Tamilakam is non-controversial, it is difficult to understand how the Cheras would have come into conflict with them before the conquest of Konkunatu unless they themselves were in the east, sandwiched between the Cholas and the Konkars.

[To be continued]

*P. Ramanathan*

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### HON. D.LITT. TO IRAVATHAM MAHADEVAN

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Padmashree Iravatham Mahadevan (84), noted epigraphist and former I.A.S. officer, is known for his successful decipherment of Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions and for his expertise on the epigraphy of the Indus Valley Civilization. The Dravidian University, Kuppam, Andhra Pradesh conferred Hon. D.Litt. on Iravatham Mahadevan in February 2015.

Earlier, Iravatham Mahadevan had been awarded D.Litt. from Tamil University, Thanjavur. He is the recipient of *Tolkappiyar Award for Lifetime Achievement in Classical Tamil* by the Government of India (2009-2010). He was formerly Chairman of International School of Dravidian Linguistics, Thiruvananthapuram and also former Editor of *Dinamani* (Tamil Daily).

*Reported by Nellai S. Muthu*

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### SPECIAL DISCOUNTS FOR DLA AND ISDL PUBLICATIONS

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Special discounts offered in connection with the commemoration of the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the doyen of modern linguistics in India and the Founder-President of the Dravidian Linguistics Association, will be continued for a few more months.

The rates of discount for the publications are as follows:

#### DLA/ISDL Publications

##### A. Life members

Books published before 1995	70%
Books published before 2005	60%
Books published after 2005	50%

##### B. Booksellers

Books published before 1995	60%
Books published before 2005	50%
Books published after 2005	45%

#### IJDL

Libraries & Individuals (Non Life-Members)	25%
Booksellers	30%

An additional discount of 5% can be sanctioned for bulk purchase, the amount of which exceeds Rs. 10,000/-. Postage and packing charges will be collected from the parties concerned.

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### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LINGUISTS

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Applications in the prescribed format are invited from eligible candidates for the posts of Professor (ST) and Associate Professor (ST) in Linguistics in Central University of Kerala, Tejaswini Hills, Kasargod.

Interested persons may log on to *cukerala.ac.in*.